

American Dream and The Great Gatsby

Summary

This lesson extends over several class periods. Students analyze the claim, grounds, warrants, qualifiers and counterclaims in three articles about the American Dream. Students conduct research and find two additional articles about the American Dream. Students then analyze the argument in those articles. Finally, students write their own argument essay about the current state of the American Dream.

Main Core Tie

English Language Arts Grade 11-12

[Reading: Informational Text Standard 1](#)

Additional Core Ties

English Language Arts Grade 11-12

[Reading: Informational Text Standard 3](#)

English Language Arts Grade 11-12

[Writing Standard 1 a.](#)

English Language Arts Grade 11-12

[Writing Standard 1 b.](#)

English Language Arts Grade 11-12

[Writing Standard 1 c.](#)

English Language Arts Grade 11-12

[Writing Standard 1 d.](#)

English Language Arts Grade 11-12

[Writing Standard 1 e.](#)

English Language Arts Grade 11-12

[Writing Standard 7](#)

English Language Arts Grade 11-12

[Writing Standard 10](#)

English Language Arts Grade 11-12

[Language Standard 1](#)

English Language Arts Grade 11-12

[Language Standard 2](#)

Group Size

Pairs

Materials

Copies of the following articles: "America Faces 1933's Realities," "Testing the Resonance of the American Dream," and "What Happens to the American Dream in a Recession." I have included links to my sources for these texts in the web site section of this lesson.

American Dream handout.

American Dream Search handout.

In-Class Argument Essay handout and rubric.

Background for Teachers

Students will need to know how to cite sources using MLA.

Students need to understand Toulmin Argumentation (claim, grounds, warrant, qualifiers and counterclaims). This is a good follow-up lesson after teaching Toulmin argumentation; it can help to cement student understanding of Toulmin.

Although this lesson may be done independently, it works well as a companion lesson for *The Great Gatsby*.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students read to determine claims and examine how ideas develop over the course of a text.

Students cite textual evidence to support analysis of the text.

Students conduct short research projects to answer a question.

Students write an argument about the current state of the American Dream.

Instructional Procedures

PART ONE

Pass out the three articles and the American Dream handout.

Explain the assignment: Do a close reading of each of the articles (but do NOT annotate the articles) and then decide what CLAIM each article is making. Record the GROUNDS (explicit textual evidence) for each CLAIM. Determine the possible WARRANTS for the grounds. Look for and record any QUALIFIERS and COUNTERCLAIMS.

Remind students that there may be more than one "correct" claim and that there are many ways to word the same claim.

PART TWO

Assign each student one partner.

Take the class to a computer lab.

Pass out the American Dream Article Search handout.

Review the assignment: You and your partner will search for TWO different articles about the American Dream. Do NOT print your articles, but read the articles and record the following information for each of the articles: correct MLA citation, title, author, claim, grounds, warrants, qualifiers, counterclaims.

PART THREE

Pass out the In-Class Argument Essay handout.

Review the assignment: Considering the current economic conditions and other factors in our country, write your own argument on the state of the American Dream. Don't forget to back up your CLAIM with GROUNDS. (Be sure to EXPLAIN your evidence and examine your warrants - Do your warrants need to be explicitly stated?) Don't forget to QUALIFY your claim and include a COUNTERCLAIM. Write your argument in the form of a mini-essay.

Remind students to refer to the rubric.

Allow students time in class to write the essay.

Assessment Plan

A rubric is included in the handouts and the instructional procedures sections of this lesson.

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